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Viewing cable 09ATHENS497, MFA POSITIVE ON AFGHANISTAN, VISA WAIVER NEGOTIATIONS, POTUS

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09ATHENS497	2009-04-06 09:42	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Athens

Appears in these articles:

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SIPDIS
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AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
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SUBJECT: MFA POSITIVE ON AFGHANISTAN, VISA WAIVER NEGOTIATIONS, POTUS
ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAN

REF: A) SECSTATE 31102, B) ATHENS 471, C) 2008 ATHENS 833, D)
SECSTATE 25892, E) GOODMAN E-MAIL 04/01/2009 ON GTMO MATRIX

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel Speckhard, Ambassador, State, AmEmbassy Athens;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador discussed ref A points on Afghanistan and Pakistan with head of the Foreign Minister's Diplomatic Cabinet, Ambassador Kostas Chalastanis, noting the issue was not only a top priority for the U.S. but also a critical one for Greece, which had recently seen Afghani migrants to Greece reaching 25,000 per year. Chalastanis agreed with this assessment and said Greece was preparing a set of plus-ups for Afghanistan (ref B). Chalastanis thought the U.S. idea of a Greek negotiating team going to Washington to discuss outstanding Visa Waiver issues was a good idea and said FM Bakoyannis supported it. Greece was positive and supportive on President Obama's recent offer of engagement with Iran (ref D). Greece was willing to re-engage on a PSI shipboarding agreement, but it was "less favorable" than other EU member-states on forming a common position on GTMO detainees, which should be dealt with on an "individual" basis. END SUMMARY.

A NEW STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

12. (C) Ambassador began with an overview of U.S.-Greece relations going into the NATO and U.S.-EU summits taking place April 3-4 and April 5. He noted that the advent of the new administration in Washington provided a strategic opportunity to boost bilateral relations. It was time to move beyond the issues of Turkey, Cyprus, and the Macedonia name issue, which were important but had limited our relations in the past, to a new relationship based on a broader strategic view of our common interests and concerns.

13. (C) In this regard, Afghanistan - which Ambassador noted was at the top of President Obama's priorities -- was a prime example of our broader common interests. Afghanistan was not only about ending the terrorist threat to the U.S. and Europe but also about helping Greece deal with the huge influx of Afghani migrants, which recently have numbered 25,000 per year. Chalastanis said this was Greece's assessment as well, and he went on to speak briefly about the plus-ups Greece intended to make to its Afghanistan military and civilian assistance (ref B).

VISA WAIVER

14. (C) Ambassador noted the strong U.S. desire to complete Greece's entry into the Visa Waiver Program and our desire to get it done as soon as possible, perhaps by June. Ambassador suggested that a Greek team be empowered to travel to Washington to negotiate. Chalastanis said that was a good proposal and that FM Bakoyannis supported sending a team as soon as possible. (NOTE: Embassy is in close touch with the MFA lead on VWP, Ioannis Raptakis, and will press him to assemble a negotiating team very soon. END NOTE.)

15. (C) On the VWP MOU, which has been finalized except for the section on repatriation, Ambassador noted that Greek insistence that it not be required to accept for repatriation former nationals who renounced their citizenship more than 15 years ago was based on a faulty analogy with the Czech Republic. While we understood the

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Czech Republic's MOU did include a 15-year limit, that was justified because the Czech Republic only came into existence as a distinct entity in the early 1990s; Greece had no such rationale for a 15-year limit on repatriation. Chalastanis was unaware of this disagreement but promised to look into it.

IRAN

16. (S) Per ref D, Ambassador asked about GOG impressions of the President's recent offer of engagement to Iran. Chlastanis said Greece was generally positive on the idea and noted signals from the Iranians that they wished to have direct contact with the U.S. He said the Iranians did not want intermediaries (which Greece has offered to us and, we presume, to the Iranians to be, ref C). Chalastanis said Greece was hopeful but cautious. He also said he had no specifics on Greek shipowners' dealings with the Iranians.

PSI SHIPBOARDING AGREEMENT

17. (C) Ambassador used mention of the shipowners to segue into signaling our desire to re-engage on the PSI shipboarding agreement. Chalastanis said he understood the shipowners had a problem with the liability provisions of the agreement, though the MFA was as puzzled as the U.S. as to why they were hung up on this. He promised to look into restarting negotiations.

GTMO DETAINEES

18. (C) In response to Ambassador's question about Greece's position on the EU common position (ref E), Chalastanis confirmed that Greece was less favorable than others, though it was willing to look at the details of cases from the U.S. and hoped the U.S. would supply a "catalog" of the detainees for EU inspection. Such cases would then need to be looked at separately, not en masse. Nevertheless, Chalastanis said the "good will" was there on the issue.

SPECKHARD